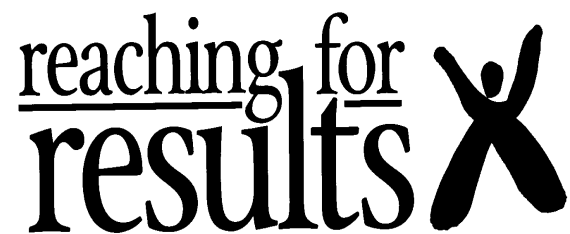


**THE 2002-03 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM:
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION EVALUATION REPORT**



**Louisiana Department of Education
Cecil J. Picard
State Superintendent of Education**

APRIL 2003

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: 2002-03 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

FUNDING AND PURPOSE	The 2002-03 <i>Starting Points Preschool Program</i> was funded with \$5,019,000 from the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Block Grant for the purpose of serving children of low-income families in pre-kindergarten classes.
SCHOOLS, CLASSES, AND RESOURCES	By October 2002, 55 systems, 87 public schools, and two nonpublic schools enrolled children in 96 classes. Seventy-five of the 96 classes also served Starting Points children in school year 2001-02. Of the 96 Starting Points teachers, 86.5% were fully certified in Nursery School, Kindergarten, Early Childhood Education, or Early Intervention; 59 teachers had participated in the previous year. Most frequently, Starting Points was reported as collaborating with programs funded through 8(g) and with the Title I Preschool Program. Other features shared among collaborating programs during 2002-03 included a curriculum and registration procedures. Teachers/staff, other professionals, and parents/guardians collaborated in 2002-03.
ELIGIBILITY AND CHILDREN SERVED	For the 2002-03 Program, 3,732 applications were received; 2,679 children (71.8%) were eligible. As the school year began, 1,505 children were enrolled, with an additional 322 children on waiting lists. According to the reported data, 82.0% of the children were eligible for free lunches, while 18.0% were eligible to purchase reduced-price lunches. In addition, 55.6% of these Starting Points participants were from single-parent homes. The October 1, 2002 <i>Student Information System (SIS)</i> record count for Starting Points was 1,441 children. These <i>SIS</i> records identified the majority of children as minority group members (56.3% Black, 2.8% Hispanic, 2.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, or 1.4% American Indian/Alaskan Native), whereas 37.3% were White children.
PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT	The most frequently used techniques for involving parents/guardians were to inform them of activities through calendars, newsletters, or other formal communication mechanisms (67.3%); to hold individual parent/teacher conferences (63.6%); and to send frequent messages to parents relating to each child's activities (54.6%). Workshops/parent meetings were held in 49 (or 89.1%) of the participating systems; 18 coordinators indicated these workshops/meetings were frequently used parent involvement activities. However, less than 50% of the parents/guardians were reported as typically attending workshops/parent meetings in 29 (or 59.2%) of the systems that offered these activities.
HEALTH AND SAFETY FINDINGS	Changes in the use of certain health and safety practices were noted, but in 100% of the participating systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the state or city fire departments inspect the schools annually; • Starting Points children participate in fire/safety drills; • vision screenings are provided to the Starting Points children; • the daily schedule includes planned, physical exercise and/or outdoor play activities; and • the schools serving Starting Points children have a policy concerning the administration of first aid and/or medications.

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BACKGROUND

In 1992-93, the *Starting Points Preschool Program* was initiated through Section H of the U. S. Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (ACT 658, or the Block Grant Act). Under the provisions of this act, federal funds were provided to improve the availability, affordability, and quality of childcare services. From 1992-93 to 2000-01, the Block Grant provided annual funding to serve at-risk four-year-olds in Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) classes. The majority of these classes were housed by Louisiana public schools, but a few nonpublic schools have also served Starting Points children. Because the Program was well received and evaluation studies provide evidence that Starting Points has sustained positive effects on its former participants, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) was interested in continuing this Program.

A new funding source, the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant, provided funds for the *Starting Points Preschool Program* during school years 2001-02 and 2002-03. In Louisiana, the Department of Social Services is the lead agency for administering the TANF funds, but in 2001, LDE was authorized to administer a portion of the TANF Block Grant funds. These funds were to be used for developing a program whose purpose is to assist low-income families by providing quality early childhood programs. A Pre-K program (now called LA 4) was created, and it began serving children in January of 2002. In addition, the *Starting Points Preschool Program* was modified in 2001-02 to operate under guidelines, regulations, and eligibility criteria that are consistent with the TANF funding source. In 2002-03, LDE continued to use TANF funds to help local school systems offer Pre-K classes through the *Starting Points Preschool Program*.

In July 2002, the LDE formed a committee of early childhood specialists who drafted a set of standards called *Louisiana Standards for Programs Serving Four-Year-Old Children*. The purpose of the Standards is to guide the development, evaluation, and improvement of all programs that serve four-year-old children in preschool programs. These Standards address eleven areas: Physical Environment; Transportation; Group Ratio and Size; Health and Safety Practices; Nutrition and Food Service; Family Involvement and Support; Staff Qualifications and Staff Development; Interactions Between Staff and Children, and Among Children; Curriculum; Assessment; and Collaboration. This report will refer to some of these Standards as the 2002-03 Starting Points Program year is described.

As in previous years, the 2002-03 *Starting Points Preschool Program* was administered by the LDE, Division of Student Standards and Assessments, Elementary Standards Section. In discussing the program philosophy, *Bulletin 1934, Starting Points Preschool Program, Program Regulations* (June 2001) indicates that local programs were to “adhere to the developmental philosophy as outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.” “Inherent in this philosophy is the provision of a child-centered program directed toward the development of cognitive, social, emotional, communication, and motor skills in a manner and at a pace consistent with the needs and capabilities of the individual child.” [*Bulletin 1934, Starting Points Preschool Program, Program Regulations* (June 2001)]

Schools participating in Starting Points were to provide quality Pre-K classes designed for children who met three eligibility criteria. As stated in *Bulletin 1934*, each participating child (1) must be one year younger than the age eligible for kindergarten, (2) was to meet the requirements of law for immunization and documentation required for regular school enrollment, and (3) was to qualify for free or reduced-price meals pursuant to the *Federal Child Nutrition Program*. In 2002-03, a local program was expected to operate a full-day program that provided at least 360 minutes of instructional time per day, for a minimum of 177 days. In addition, *Bulletin 1934* specified the qualifications of the teachers, defined class size limitations, and required the curriculum to be developmentally appropriate and to address all areas of development, including social, emotional, cognitive, and physical.

Efforts were made to continue useful practices as in previous years. For example, once funding for 2002-03 was available, LDE staff of the Elementary Standards Section (who are the state-level Program coordinators) prepared and distributed written application materials, guidelines, and regulation documents to schools or systems interested in securing funding approval. Also, the LDE processed applications from systems/schools that wished to implement local programs. As systems or schools received approval and notification of the amount of money allocated, system/school personnel arranged for the Pre-K classes, advertised the local programs, hired the teachers, identified eligible children, and designated an employee to serve as the coordinator for the local Starting Points program(s).

When the 2002-03 school year began, 55 systems (i.e., 53 public school systems, one diocesan system, and one nonpublic school) implemented local programs. While most of the participating school systems were offering the *Starting Points Preschool Program* for the eleventh consecutive year, some local programs were now located on different school campuses. Because some school sites were participating for the first time in 2002-03, there were both new and continuing sites. In 2002-03, each site was to be monitored for compliance with federal regulations. The compliance monitoring of the sites was performed by the state-level Program coordinators.

State-level Program coordinators also provided other technical assistance such as sponsoring an annual early childhood conference, informing local administrators of other staff development opportunities, helping to train local program staff in using developmentally-appropriate techniques and/or the *Creative Curriculum*, and visiting selected Pre-K classes of Starting Points participants. During these class visits, the state-level Program coordinators examined the instructional environment, observed the teachers/aides, assessed the quality of the Program by using *The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ECERS-R)*, and recommended ways of improving the Pre-K classes.

The state-level Program coordinators also agreed to provide the Louisiana Department of Social Services with an evaluation of this Program. As in previous years, they requested these evaluation services from LDE staff members, who are currently employed within the Division of Planning, Analysis and Information Resources. The purpose of evaluating this Program was to provide information to policy makers and program administrators. A two-phase evaluation design was used, with the first phase focused on describing the implementation and participation characteristics associated with the *Starting Points Preschool Program* in 2002-03. In the second phase of the 2002-03 evaluation study, additional information will be collected as a follow-up to prior years of the Program, with the main goal of studying how former participants were performing as they continue in Louisiana public schools.

Procedures, instruments, and data sources used in the 2002-03 evaluation were revised from those of the previous evaluation study. For the most part, these revisions were made to reduce the amount of time needed in collecting and analyzing data. Descriptions of evaluation activities and the data sources used to prepare this Program Description Evaluation Report are included in the next section of this document.

EVALUATION ACTIVITIES AND DATA SOURCES

In September 2002, the state-level Program coordinators provided the evaluators with copies of *Bulletin 1934* (June 2001), the *Starting Points Preschool Program: Guidelines for SY 2002-03* document, and the program application package. All of these materials were reviewed in order to plan for the evaluation. In October 2002, the state-level Program coordinators also provided a list of the participating systems and schools, the names/contact information of the system-level program coordinators and information on the *Starting Points Preschool Program* teachers. The system-level initial roster enrollment counts and the number of classes per system were provided in November 2002. Updated information on enrollment was provided in February 2003.

Also in September 2002, the evaluators and the state-level coordinators revised the 2001-02 data collection instrument to prepare the *2002-03 Starting Points Preschool Program, Program Description Survey (PDS)* instrument. Where practical, the *2002-03 PDS* items were structured to be consistent with items utilized on the 2001-02 *PDS* instrument. However, some items were eliminated from the *2002-03 PDS*, new items concerning program collaboration were added, and the format of some open-ended items was changed to facilitate data analysis. By October 24, 2002, the *2002-03 PDS* was finalized; it has five major sections:

- I. Applicant, Eligibility Criteria, and Participant Information
- II. Program Collaboration
- III. Parental Involvement
- IV. Health and Safety Activities, Practices, and Policies
- V. Comments

A copy of the *2002-03 PDS* instrument (see the Appendix) and accompanying memos were mailed on October 25, 2002. The *PDS* was sent to 54 superintendents and to the coordinator of a nonpublic school program that does not have a superintendent. A cover memo to superintendents requested that *2002-03 PDS* materials be forwarded to the system-level *Starting Points Preschool Program* Coordinators. An additional cover memo asked these coordinators to return the completed instruments to Barbara Abshire by November 22, 2002.

By the deadline, 39 systems (70.9%) had returned a completed *PDS* instrument. Systems that had not returned the *PDS* instruments were contacted. By December 11, 2002, each participating system had returned a completed *PDS* instrument. Both evaluators began working with the *PDS* data and they contacted the system-level coordinators when additional information was needed.

As in prior year studies, other data sources were used to prepare this evaluation report. For example, the ethnicity of the enrolled participants is drawn from records in the *Student Information System (SIS)*, reported as of October 1, at the end of the first *SIS* data collection period. Since there is a continuing concern about the accuracy of the *SIS* Pre-K records, the system-level *Starting Points* coordinators were directed to provide their *SIS* coordinators with a roster of the *Starting Points* students. For the 2002-03 school year, *SIS* data were not ready to use until January 8, 2003.

In addition, one state-level coordinator provided the evaluators with the *ECERS-R* data collected during the 2001-02 Program. In two previous studies, *ECERS-R* data was considered to be a measure of the program quality. If sites and/or teachers that were assessed in 2001-02 continued in the current Program year, then the 2001-02 *ECERS-R* data may shed light on the anticipated quality of the 2002-03 Program. Therefore, one evaluation activity was to analyze the 2001-02 *ECERS-R* data and present the main findings in this report. One evaluator also reviewed the Standards in November of 2002.

As data from these various sources became available, the evaluators shared the responsibility for data analysis. By February 7, 2003, all information provided by the state-level Program coordinators, the responses to the *PDS* items, and information extracted from the *SIS* Pre-K records were analyzed. The results were used to draft this report.

In February 2003, the state-level Program coordinators were asked to review the first draft of this report. The evaluators and state-level Program coordinators discussed findings, and then recommended revisions to the *PDS* report were made; a subsequent draft report was prepared and transmitted for review. Prior to the completion of the final report, additional LDE staff members reviewed the report. Recommended changes were made; the report was completed by April 2003.

The purpose of this report is to provide a description of the *2002-03 Starting Points Preschool Program*. Data summary exhibits are presented to provide statistics based on the analysis of *SIS* data, *PDS* data, and other information supplied by the Elementary Standards Section. Following the data summary exhibits, the report continues with a discussion section and conclusions about the *Starting Points Preschool Program*.

After publication of this report, the local Superintendents, the state-level Program coordinators, certain employees of the Louisiana Department of Social Services, and selected LDE employees will each have access to a copy of the full report. Other stakeholders will receive only the Executive Summary. There is also a plan to place the final report on the website of the Louisiana Department of Education.

PRESENTATION OF DATA SUMMARY EXHIBITS

Within this report, 18 data summary exhibits are presented under the headings that are listed below:

- resources for implementing the *2002-03 Starting Points Preschool Program*,
- applicant/enrollment data and other demographics,
- recent program changes,
- parental involvement,
- health and safety information, and
- comments about the Program.

Each data summary exhibit includes source references, while some exhibits also contain footnotes. Where necessary for clarity, additional discussion of specific data sources introduces the related exhibit(s).

For example, Exhibits 1 through 3 were prepared based on information, documents, and the 2001-02 *ECERS-R* data supplied by the Elementary Standards Section. Taken together, these three exhibits summarize funds, program sites, teachers, and the anticipated quality of this Program year, which can be thought of as some of the resources available to the *2002-03 Starting Points Preschool Program*. The resources section is continued by presenting Exhibits 4 through 7 which contain information describing how the *Starting Points Preschool Program* and the people associated with it collaborated with other programs and/or with professionals during 2002-03.

**RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTING
THE 2002-03 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM**

EXHIBIT 1. ALLOCATION, SYSTEMS, SCHOOLS, CLASSES, AND TEACHERS

TOTAL ALLOCATION	\$5,019,000		
PARTICIPATING SYSTEMS	Total of 55 systems, including 53 public systems, one diocese, and one other nonpublic school.		
NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS PER SYSTEM¹	NO. OF SYSTEMS	% OF SYSTEMS	
One	35	63.6	
Two	13	23.7	
Three	2	3.6	
Four	3	5.5	
Five	2	3.6	
NUMBER OF CLASSES²	Total: 96	Continuing: 75	New: 21
NUMBER OF TEACHERS²	Total: 96	Continuing: 59	New: 37

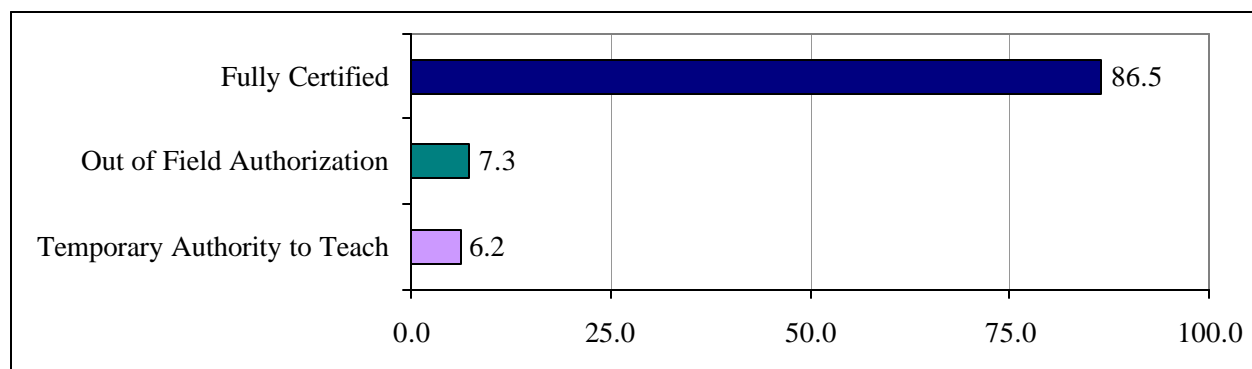
Source Reference:

All information in Exhibit 1 is based on documents supplied by the Elementary Standards Section.

- ¹ A total of 89 schools served the Starting Points children, but most systems (63.6%) offered the Program at just one school. There was one less system and seven fewer schools in 2002-03 than in the previous program year.
- ² If classes or teachers participated in the 2001-02 Program, these are "continuing," whereas "new" means the class or teacher did not participate in the 2001-02 Program. As shown in Exhibit 1, the majority of the classes and the majority of the teachers are "continuing." However, the number of new classes and the number of new teachers are greater than in the previous program year.

Based on information reported to the state-level Program coordinators about the 96 teachers who provided instruction to Starting Points children in 2002-03, Exhibit 2 was prepared to graphically display the percent of teachers by their certification status. As shown in Exhibit 2, 86.5% (or 83) of the teachers were fully certified in Early Childhood Education, Nursery School Education, Kindergarten, or Early Intervention, as specified by the Program regulations. Approximately 6.2% (or 6) of the teachers were employed with Temporary Authority to Teach, and 7.3% (or 7) of the teachers had an Out of Field Authority to Teach.

**EXHIBIT 2. PERCENT OF THE 96 STARTING POINTS TEACHERS
BY CERTIFICATION STATUS**



Source Reference:

The percents in Exhibit 2 were calculated by using certification information provided by the LDE, Elementary Standards Section updated October 9, 2002.

With respect to the teachers of the 2002-03 Starting Points children, the majority were continuing teachers and 86.5% were fully certified in the areas appropriate for instructing young children. Such qualified and experienced teachers should have been able to provide a quality Program for the 2002-03 Starting Points participants, especially if the continuing teachers had implemented high quality programs in the past.

In the previous year, 2001-02 Starting Points classes were assessed with the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition (ECERS-R)*, which is an instrument authored by Harms, Clifford, and Cryer (1998). These authors indicated that the observations and ratings were developed to measure the quality of early childhood programs, for research or program improvement purposes (Harms, Clifford, and Cryer, 1998).

The *ECERS-R* consists of 43 items, which are rated by a qualified observer. Earlier evaluation reports have explained the use and scoring of the *ECERS-R*. (Readers can find these earlier reports on the Louisiana Department of Education's website at www.louisianaschools.net.) Ratings on each item can range from 1 to 7. The odd-numbered ratings are anchored to a set of indicators that the qualified observers use while visiting a class site. The labels of the program's quality are determined by using the *ECERS-R* scoring system (1 for *inadequate*, 3 for *minimal*, 5 for *good*, and 7 for *excellent*) (Harms, Clifford, and Cryer, 1998).

In 2001-02, the state-level Program coordinators visited and assessed 37 local programs with the *ECERS-R*. One state coordinator tabulated the *ECERS-R* ratings, and she provided the tabulated results to the evaluators. Analysis of the tabulated results indicated that 18 of the assessed class sites were staffed by new teachers; that is, staffed by teachers who had not worked with the *Starting Points Preschool Program* before 2001-02. On the *ECERS-R*, the teacher-average ratings ranged from a low of 2.95 to a high of 6.62. Thirty-one of the 37 teacher-average ratings were 5.0 or above; this finding suggests that 83.8% of the assessed teachers were implementing programs of good quality in 2001-02. An average rating was also computed for 40 of the 43 items. Exhibit 3 presents additional information about these item averages.

**EXHIBIT 3: 2001-02 EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE RESULTS:
ITEM-AVERAGES FOR 40 ITEMS**

Average Score on Items By Ranges	Number of Items With Average Score in This Range	Percent of 40 Items That Were Scored in This Range
6.0 to 7.0	14	35.0%
5.0 to 5.9	21	52.5%
4.0 to 4.9	5	12.5%
Less than 4.0	0	0.0%
Total Items Scored = 40		

Source Reference:

Exhibit 3 is based on a summary of the 2001-02 *ECERS-R* ratings that were supplied by the Elementary Standards Section.

All of these item-average ratings ranged from a low of 4.5 to a high of 6.5. Five (or 12.5%) of the 40 items had an item-average rating of less than 5.0. These items were: Nature/Science (4.5), Music/Movement (4.5), Gross Motor Equipment (4.6), Space for Gross Motor Play (4.7), and Nap/Rest (4.9). Since these item-average scores are almost at the 5.0 rating, it is possible that a little more assistance with developmentally appropriate techniques may bring the practices that were rated as low, up to a level that receives a higher quality rating.

Of all 40 items scored for the 37 program sites, 35 items had average ratings between 5.0 and 6.5. As shown in Exhibit 3, the majority (21 or 52.5%) of the items received an item-average rating between 5.0 and 5.9. Averages in this range suggest that when the observers visited classes in 2001-02, they saw practices that are similar to those used in programs of good quality. Furthermore, 14 items (or 35.0%) had an item-average rating between 6.0 and 6.5, indicating the observed practices were moving towards practices noted in programs of excellent quality. The three items with the highest item-averages were: Schedule (6.5), Room Arrangement (6.4), and Furniture for Routine Care, Play, and Learning (6.4).

The previous year *ECERS-R* ratings and the 2002-03 teacher certification data suggest that Starting Points is striving to meet the Staff Qualifications and Staff Development Program Standard. That is, the program is staffed by qualified teachers who understand child development. In the programs with continuing teachers who received the higher *ECERS-R* ratings, it is reasonable to anticipate that these teachers will implement quality programs again in the 2002-03 school year. A total of 75 class sites and 59 of the Starting Points teachers were identified as “continuing,” with respect to their participation in the *Starting Points Preschool Program*.

In addition to continuing classes and teachers, another feature of the *Starting Points Preschool Program*, which can be thought of as a resource is this Program’s collaboration with other programs, agencies, services, and groups of interested people. Two open-ended items of the 2001-02 *PDS* requested information about program collaboration. Although some system-level Program coordinators did not respond to these items, the comments that were given in 2001-02 were very extensive. Items pertaining to program collaboration were revised for the 2002-03 *PDS* to explore in more detail, which programs collaborated frequently, specific ways in which the people collaborated, and other features that are shared by early childhood programs. Exhibit 4 summarizes which programs collaborated in 2002-03.

EXHIBIT 4. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS
(N = 55 Systems)

NAMES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS THAT WERE COORDINATED WITH STARTING POINTS IN 2002-03	SYSTEMS	
	No.	%
Early Childhood Programs funded by 8(g)	48	87.3
Title I Preschool Program	41	74.6
Early Childhood Programs coordinated with Special Education	39	70.9
Head Start	27	49.1
LA 4 Program	19	34.6
Even Start	9	16.4
Preschool Program funded through Education Excellence Fund	4	7.3
Reading Excellence Act (REA) Program	3	5.5
HIPPY	2	3.6
Montessori Program/School	2	3.6
Other (e.g., First Baptist Church Preschool, Jumpstart, Millage, Gifted and General Fund, locally funded, NSECD)	7	12.7

Source References:

Information in Exhibit 4 is based on the specific programs that were identified when the coordinators responded to Item II-1 of the *PDS* instrument. Eight coordinators also provided the following information while responding to Item II-1.

“The system has two early childhood classes funded by Education Excellence Funds which also collaborate with the *Starting Points Preschool Program*.”

One coordinator indicated, “Title I starts in Kindergarten” and that the system was “collaborating with the Archdiocese of New Orleans.”

“We have 37 locally funded students in Pre-K.”

“Locally funded Pre -K Program”

(Name of Parish) “has established a Pre-K Montessori School at (named a school). The three 8(g) and two Starting Points classes were moved to this campus. LA 4 classes were established on the campus. The teachers have inservice together and collaborate frequently. The principal provides excellent leadership. Her background is in kindergarten and she is a certified Montessori teacher.”

One coordinator reported that Even Start no longer has a Pre-K class, but there is a birth-3 years of age class. The same coordinator also reported the Reading Excellence Act (REA) Program had a Pre-K class in school year 2001-2002.

“Speech services through the school system and medical services are provided by the Head Start Program operated by the Parish Government.”

One coordinator indicated the Reading Excellence Act (REA) Program is “only in three schools.”

As illustrated in Exhibit 4, Starting Points most often collaborated with a Pre-K program funded through 8(g) or with a Title I Preschool Program, as has been the case in earlier studies. It was also noted that 19 coordinators reported collaboration with the LA 4 program, which began in January 2002 and is also funded by TANF.

Early childhood programs that are collaborating may share implementation or administrative features such as a curriculum, a waiting list of eligible children, registration procedures, or advertisement. Exhibit 5 illustrates the extent to which such features are shared among programs. As shown, more than 90% of the participating systems share a curriculum and/or registration procedures when Starting Points collaborates with other programs.

EXHIBIT 5. OTHER SHARED FEATURES
(N = 55 Systems)

STARTING POINTS SHARES THE FOLLOWING WITH ONE OR MORE OTHER PROGRAMS	SYSTEMS	
	No.	%
A curriculum ¹	51	92.7
Registration procedures	50	90.9
Method of program advertisement	45	81.8
Waiting list of eligible children	44	80.0
Costs of a particular class ²	22	40.0
After school care ³	11	20.0
Before school care ³	10	18.2

Source References:

Information in Exhibit 5 is based on the specific features that were identified in response to Item II-3 of the *PDS* instrument.

- ¹ Next to "A curriculum" one coordinator wrote "SBE Archdiocese of N.O. which is based on State Standards for Pre-K."
- ² By "costs of a particular class," one coordinator wrote, "comparisons are made."
- ³ By the Items "Before school care" and "After school care" one coordinator noted, "We plan to create either in January or September, 2003" and another coordinator wrote, "N/A."

Within any program there are participating children, parents/guardians, the teachers/staff, and possibly other professionals. Exhibit 6 summarizes the collaboration of these people, based on coordinator responses to the 2002-03 *PDS*. As shown in Exhibit 6, each form of collaboration was reported by at least 7% of the participating systems. Seven forms of collaboration were reported by 95% to 100% of the participating systems.

In 100% of the systems, the teachers and staff collaborated by (1) participating in professional or staff development activities, such as inservices, workshops, conferences, other trainings; (2) sharing ideas and/or materials to improve programs; and (3) finding ways to increase parental involvement and/or to communicate with the parents/guardians. The three most frequent ways that children of another program collaborated were by attending field trips and/or by participating in special events with the Starting Points children (94.6%); by interacting on the playground (87.3%); and by using the library, computer lab, gym, cafeteria, and/or music room (etc.) at the same time as Starting Points children (81.8%).

EXHIBIT 6. WAYS THE PEOPLE COLLABORATE
(N = 55 Systems)

THE PEOPLE	WAYS THE PEOPLE COLLABORATE	SYSTEMS	
		No.	%
Teachers/staff	* Participate in professional or staff development activities, such as inservices, workshops, conferences, other trainings.	55	100.0
	* Have grade-level meetings.	47	85.5
	* Share ideas and/or materials to improve programs.	55	100.0
	* Curriculum development activities.	43	78.2
	* Plan lessons, activities, and/or thematic units.	48	87.3
	* Observe in each other's classrooms.	38	69.1
	* Find ways to increase parental involvement and/or to communicate with the parents/guardians.	55	100.0
Children of another program	* Are in a prorated class and share all activities.	17	30.9
	* Interact on the playground.	48	87.3
	* Join the Starting Points children for several daily activities.	32	58.2
	* Also attend field trips and/or participate in special events.	52	94.6
	* Use the library, computer lab, gym, cafeteria, and/or music room (etc.) at the same time as the Starting Points children.	45	81.8
Parents and guardians	* Volunteer to help with a special task such as reading, art projects, and/or materials preparation.	47	85.5
	* Receive information together by attending workshops or parent meetings.	47	85.5
	* Help with a special event at school, such as a play, party, or seasonal program for the children.	54	98.2
	* Join the children on the field trips.	53	96.4
	* Share with the participating children something about work, a hobby, a special talent, and/or a culture.	37	67.3
Professionals	Who provide:		
	* Health services and/or immunizations.	47	85.5
	* Social services and/or counseling.	40	72.7
	* Legal assistance.	4	7.3
	* Dental care.	7	12.7
	* Literacy training for parents/guardians.	34	61.8
	* Safety education.	42	76.4
	* Hearing/vision screening.	55	100.0
	* Speech therapy.	54	98.2
* Evaluation or appraisal of the children.	49	89.1	

Source References:

Information in Exhibit 6 is based on coordinator responses to Item II-2 of the *PDS* instrument. The percents in Exhibit 6 were calculated by using 55 as the total number of responding coordinators.

In more than 96% of the participating systems, parents and guardians collaborated by helping with a special event at school (e.g. a play, party, or seasonal program for the children) and/or by joining the children on the field trips. In 85.5% of the participating systems, parents/guardians collaborated by helping with a special task such as reading, art projects, and/or materials preparation, and they received information together by attending workshops or parent meetings.

In a majority of the participating systems, there are collaborating professionals who can provide a wide variety of services to the Starting Points children. For example, there are collaborating professionals who provide: (1) hearing/vision screening in 100% of the systems, (2) speech therapy in 98.2% of the systems, and (3) evaluation or appraisal of the children in 89.1% of the systems. However, only seven systems (12.7%) had professionals who provided dental care and only four systems (7.3%) had professionals who provided legal assistance. Eleven coordinators made additional statements concerning present or past collaboration. Exhibit 7 presents these comments.

EXHIBIT 7. COORDINATORS' COMMENTS ABOUT PRESENT OR PAST COLLABORATION (N = 11 Coordinators)

Coordinators who responded to Parts of Item II-2 on ways people collaborate

On Item II-2, one coordinator added in "Parish-wide" in the item parts pertaining to teachers/staff and then wrote "N/A" on the sections pertaining to children and to parents/guardians. A footnote was added which said, "Starting Points is the only preschool program at (named a school)."

One coordinator indicated the system makes "referrals" for legal assistance.

By health services/immunizations, two coordinators wrote, "school nurse."

Next to the item on literacy training, one coordinator wrote, "GED opportunities on campus" and another coordinator wrote, "Even Start." These same two coordinators added other comments; the former coordinator put "Dental Screening" next to the item about dental care, and the latter coordinator wrote, "We have 2 fully funded Starting Points classes," by the item on prorated classes.

Coordinators who responded to Item V and discussed present collaboration

"All (name of parish) Schools pre-kindergarten classes follow the *Creative Curriculum* and *ECERS-R*. The only difference for any of the classes is the funding source and the criteria for selection."

"Great collaboration with other pre-kindergarten programs."

"The Starting Points Preschool teacher collaborates with the 8(g), locally funded, and co-enrollment teachers working with the Head Start Programs."

"The Starting Points Program is working well in conjunction with the LA 4 Preschool Program, the Title I Preschool Program, and the Special Education Preschool Program to provide developmentally appropriate instructional programs which fulfill the needs of the four-year-old children in (name of parish)".

"There was a collaborative effort to register as many 4 year olds for preschool as possible. The students were then divided into the various programs. (Name of school) serves students. Forty of these students were assigned to Starting Points based on free lunch application. As school began, some students did not attend and adjustments were made. All programs drew from the waiting list and therefore we have no children who are waiting for services. When we loose a child, we have to wait for new students to register."

Coordinator who responded to Item V and discussed past collaboration

"The Before and After School Care Program was very helpful to our working and in school parents. Unfortunately this program is no longer available. We think it would be beneficial to provide this service to our parents and students."

When local and state Program coordinators review the information reported on collaboration, they will have additional data to use in assessing how well Starting Points adheres to various Standards. The following Standards which were described on the LDE website appear to be the ones that are most closely related to the collaboration data of this evaluation report.

Collaboration: “Collaboration implies that responsibility for the care and education of young children extends beyond the immediate family and beyond any one agency. The providers of early childhood programs and related family services differ in each local community. Successful collaborations support activities across public and private domains. Collaboration can serve to start and build a local network of programs that support the diverse needs of Pre-K children and their families.”

Family Involvement and Support: The staff will coordinate the provision of support services for all enrolled Pre-K children and their families to support maximum early education and care benefits to children so that they are well prepared for formal schooling, and therefore, more likely to experience later academic success.”

Staff Qualifications and Staff Development: “The program will be sufficiently staffed by well-qualified adults who understand child development and who recognize and provide for children’s individual needs and differences. Staff will participate in on going staff development. The program will encourage staff to further their education and training.”

Interaction Between Staff and Children, and Among Children: “Each child’s unique identity, language and cultural background are respected through warm, personal interactions between staff and children. Staff is supportive and responsive to children and facilitates interactions among children. Staff promotes the development of social skills, language, intellectual and emotional growth. Discipline is designed to develop self-discipline and problem-solving strategies.”

Curriculum: “Curriculum is defined as everything the staff does with children. The curriculum should be developmentally appropriate and designed for active involvement by children in the learning process. Young children can learn through play, active manipulation of the environment, concrete experiences, and communicating with peers and adults. The curriculum should provide a well-balanced variety of activities and materials that encourage these behaviors and are appropriate to each child’s age, background, and stage of development, and individual considerations, including disabilities.”

In addition to these standards, recommendations for quality early childhood programs often call for many different types of providers and other community groups to meet the needs of young children by collaborating. Based on the data reported in the previous year (2001-02), it was evident that the participating systems and schools have been very successful in their efforts to collaborate Starting Points with other helpful programs, groups, and/or interested individuals. Data reported for 2002-03 indicates that collaboration is continuing. This continuing collaboration is a resource that helps the systems and schools to meet the needs of the Starting Points participants.

Past evaluation studies of the *Starting Points Preschool Program* have also indicated that the Program is thought to have many strengths; it is generally well-received by parents, guardians, and the local community; there is evidence indicating that the Program has sustained positive effects on its former participants. That is, follow-up studies have shown the Starting Points former participants to:

- Attend school frequently,
- Be successful in lower elementary grades such that the majority are promoted,
- Have lower retention rates than the state as a whole, and
- Have lower retention rates than observed among all free/reduced lunch recipients within Louisiana public schools.

Interest in the *Starting Points Preschool Program* also continues, as evidenced by the two to three thousand applications received annually for this Program. While several of Louisiana's leaders would like to have Universal Pre-K services, current applicants cannot be served unless they meet the eligibility criteria. Unfortunately, in some systems, space is so limited that this Program cannot accommodate every eligible applicant. However, efforts are made to provide services to as many eligible children as possible through placement in other Pre-K programs and/or by maintaining a waiting list.

The current evaluation study collected information regarding applicants, eligibility, children enrolled, the number of children on waiting lists, and other demographic data. A summary of these findings and the sources of the data are presented in the next section of this report.

APPLICANT/ENROLLMENT DATA AND OTHER DEMOGRAPHICS

EXHIBIT 8. EXTENT OF SERVICES PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS
(N = 55 Systems)

SYSTEM NAME	STARTING POINTS CHILDREN			NO. OF CHILDREN ON WAITING LIST
	TOTAL NO. OF APPLICANTS	NO. OF ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS	NO. OF CHILDREN ENROLLED	
Acadia ¹	86	70	40	0
Ascension	24	21	19	2
Assumption	38	16	16	0
Avoyelles	80	58	20	13
Beauregard	80	49	20	0
Bienville	18	18	16	NA
Bossier	42	42	28	0
Caddo	80	56	48	10
Calcasieu	111	99	57	39
Caldwell	27	20	20	NA
Catahoula	30	22	17	5
Claiborne	20	20	20	0
Concordia	30	30	20	1
DeSoto	120	88	20	0
East Baton Rouge	79	77	70	4
East Feliciana	27	24	18	0
Evangeline	29	29	29	0
Iberia	53	40	40	4
Iberville	28	27	20	3
Jefferson	143	110	93	33
Lafayette ²	700	500	38	0
Lafourche	148	90	29	27
LaSalle	168	17	17	0
Livingston	80	25	20	0
Madison	35	35	20	5
Morehouse	54	39	40	7
Natchitoches	40	20	20	2
Orleans	81	81	75	0
Ouachita	69	38	25	8
Page Subtotals	2,520	1,761	915	163

Source References:

Numbers of applicants, eligible applicants, and children on the waiting list are from the PDS instrument. Numbers of children enrolled are from the October 1, 2002 roster information that was submitted to the Elementary Standards Section.

EXHIBIT 8 (CONTINUED). EXTENT OF SERVICES PROVIDED
TO ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS
(N = 55 Systems)

SYSTEM NAME	STARTING POINTS CHILDREN			NO. OF CHILDREN ON WAITING LIST
	TOTAL NO. OF APPLICANTS	NO. OF ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS	NO. OF CHILDREN ENROLLED	
Plaquemines	31	22	20	2
Pointe Coupee	23	23	20	2
Rapides	59	49	38	0
Red River	20	20	20	0
Richland	45	20	20	5
Sabine	99	78	20	17
St. Bernard ³	20	20	20	0
St. Helena	67	62	20	5
St. James	14	14	14	0
St. John the Baptist	25	25	20	5
St. Landry	60	60	40	20
St. Martin	97	89	21	6
St. Mary	58	30	28	16
St. Tammany	61	56	40	21
Tangipahoa	92	24	20	2
Terrebonne	114	64	40	10
Union	30	20	20	0
Vermilion	24	24	23	0
Vernon ⁴	20	20	19	5
Washington	16	16	16	0
Webster	32	31	20	11
West Baton Rouge	40	20	12	20
Winn	30	20	20	0
City of Monroe	92	81	40	8
Brighter Horizon of Baton Rouge ⁵	23	15	4	0
New Orleans Archdiocese	20	15	15	4
Page Subtotals	1,212	918	590	159
Totals ^{6, 7}	3,732	2,679	1,505	322

¹ Of the 70 eligible applicants, 40 enrolled in Starting Points. "Remaining students enrolled in Title I classes." No students on waiting list because "Title I and 8g Student Enhancement Pre-K classes are available."

² "Did a universal preschool application."

³ "Universal Preschool-No Waiting List."

⁴ "Small number on waiting list due to 140 students served by Head Start."

⁵ "All other eligible children (11) are participating in NSECD."

⁶ Among the 3,732 applicants for the 2002-03 Starting Points Preschool Program, 71.8% (or 2,679) were determined to be eligible for participation; 1,505 children were enrolled in classes by October 2002. An additional 322 children were on waiting lists in 32 of the participating systems as the school year began. By January 2003, there were only 224 children on waiting lists in 28 of the systems and the Program was now enrolling 1,506 children.

⁷ Table 9 provides additional demographic information relative to the beginning of the 2002-03 Program year.

EXHIBIT 9. CLASS AND CHILD DEMOGRAPHICS
(N = 55 Systems)

CLASSES AND CHILDREN	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
NUMBER OF CLASSES PROVIDED¹		
One	32	58.2
Two	14	25.5
Three	3	5.5
Four	4	7.3
Five	1	1.8
Six	1	1.8
NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENROLLED¹		
Fewer than 20	12	21.8
20 – 39	31	56.4
40 – 59	9	16.4
60 – 79	2	3.6
80 or more	1	1.8
OTHER DEMOGRAPHICS		
	PARTICIPANTS	
	NO.	%
ETHNICITY²		
Black	811	56.3
White	538	37.3
Hispanic	40	2.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	32	2.2
American Indian/Alaskan Native	20	1.4
Total Reported	1,441	100.0
CHILDREN FROM SINGLE-PARENT HOMES³	837	55.6
CHILDREN RECEIVING:⁴		
Free lunches	1,243	82.0
Reduced-Price lunches	273	18.0

Source References:

Numbers of classes and numbers of children enrolled are from information submitted to the Elementary Standards Section. *Ethnicity data* are from *SIS* (as of October 1, 2002), but the remaining data are from the *PDS* instrument.

- ¹ Starting Points children were enrolled in a total of 96 classes, with 58.2% of the participating systems providing only one class. The majority of these systems (56.4%) had enrolled 20 to 39 children in the *2002-03 Starting Points Preschool Program*, by October 2002.
- ² At the end of the first data collection period, *SIS* records indicated that the *2002-03 Starting Points Preschool Program* funded 1,441 Pre -K participants. Two public systems had not entered records on Starting Points children; the two nonpublic schools do not submit data to *SIS*. The majority of the children who did have a *SIS* record were identified as Black (811 or 56.3%).
- ³ Of the 1,505 enrolled participants, 55.6% of the children were from single-parent homes.
- ⁴ These percents were calculated by using 1,516 as the total number of participants; 82.0% of the children received free lunches.

RECENT PROGRAM CHANGES

As previously noted in this report, the eligibility criteria and guidelines for implementing the *Starting Points Preschool Program* were changed for the 2001-02 school year. Responses to Item I of the previous year's *PDS* instrument provided information about the impact that the Program changes had (e.g, on the number of applicants, enrollments, or on the selection of the children who were participants). While the free/reduced lunch criterion was NOT always easy to use for the 2001-02 Program, the majority of the previous year's coordinators' comments lead to an impression that the new eligibility criteria would help more children to qualify. If funding for the Program remained at the same level or was increased, and it became easier to fill a Starting Points class with eligible children, it would be reasonable to expect the Program would expand to serve a larger number of needy children.

Since changes to the eligibility criteria did not seem to be problematic in 2001-02, items addressing these criteria were eliminated on the *2002-03 PDS* instrument. However, an open-ended item was included to invite coordinators to comment on the eligibility criteria if they wished to do so. Some coordinators also commented about the eligibility criteria when they responded to Item V of the *PDS*.

While not an eligibility criterion, the attendance requirement that is associated with reimbursement by TANF funds was discussed by nine coordinators in the 2001-02 Program year. There were no items about this attendance requirement on the *2002-03 PDS* instrument, but four coordinators commented on this Programmatic change as they responded to the *2002-03 PDS*. A total of 14 coordinators (representing approximately 25.5% of the participating systems) provided 15 comments on the eligibility criteria or on the attendance requirement. These comments were combined to prepare Exhibit 10.

EXHIBIT 10. COORDINATORS' COMMENTS ON PROGRAM CHANGES (ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND/OR THE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENT) (N = 55 Systems)¹

COMMENT PERTAINED TO:	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Free or reduced price meals criterion ²	7	12.7%
Attendance requirement	4	7.3%
All criteria	2	3.6%
Former criteria	2	3.6%

Source Reference:

- ¹ Fourteen coordinators commented on eligibility criteria and/or on the attendance requirement as they responded to Items I-6 and V of the *PDS* instrument. One coordinator made two comments; that system was counted in two rows of Exhibit 10.
- ² As shown, the free/reduced lunch criterion was discussed most often by coordinators who commented on the topics listed in Exhibit 10. Exhibit 11 provides the detailed comments of the coordinators.

EXHIBIT 11. DETAILED COMMENTS ON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OR THE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENT

Free/Reduced Lunch Criterion (7 Systems)

“We would like for the program to be offered to all students and not just Free and Reduced Lunch students.”

“It is difficult to determine lunch status before school starts (food service guidelines).”

“We do not know if waiting list applicants are eligible or not. We cannot find out until they complete and submit the free lunch application.”

“Qualifying for free lunch is a much less invasive way of determining eligibility than collecting check stubs.”

“We select the children for the Starting Points program before it is determined if they are on free or reduced lunch.”

“The free and reduced lunch criterion sometimes excludes more “needy” students in terms of education.”

“Increase monthly income guidelines to include more families. Accept students who live in Title I attendance areas regardless of eligibility for free/reduced lunch.”

Attendance Requirement Comments (4 Systems)

“Funding the program on student attendance can be a problem.”

“The program is very beneficial to the children in our school district; however, the attendance requirement needs to be changed. The school system should not be penalized if a four-year-old is absent more than 26% of the calendar school days per month. The cost for teachers, aides, and supplies is constant regardless of the number of children present on any given day. Any loss of funding creates a tremendous hardship on the stability of this worthy program. If a child leaves the program for any reason and another child who qualifies is not available, the school system should not be punished by having monies withheld. Parent mobility is out of our control, as well as the number of days a child is ill during a month.”

“With the new guidelines/policies of Starting Points, students must be present each day in order to receive reimbursement for each child. It is impossible for all students to be present each day; four-year-olds experience colds, rashes, and other communicable diseases, especially during their first year of school. We do not feel that it is fair to the children and system to be penalized for things beyond our control. If at anytime in the future, policies/regulations are revised, please give another look at this issue.”

“When requesting reimbursement of funds, consideration should be given to students who were absent because of medical reasons (when a doctor’s excuse can be obtained).”

All Criteria (2 Systems)

“The criteria used for eligibility allows the district to service children who are at-risk. Unfortunately we were unable to serve all children who qualified, therefore we do have a current waiting list.”

“The new eligibility requirements have been an asset for serving at-risk children.”

Former Criteria (2 Systems)

“Now that the requirements associated with eligibility are not as stringent as previous guidelines, we are able to maintain the same enrollment without the hassle of moving students around when they are no longer eligible.”

“I wonder what happened to the criteria of parents required to work or job train or attend school. I thought this was an excellent idea.”

As shown in Exhibits 10 and 11, the free/reduced lunch criterion received more comments than any other eligibility criterion. Difficulty in using this criterion within the *Starting Points Preschool Program* seems to be due to systems not knowing which children are eligible for free/reduced priced lunches at the time families are applying for Starting Points services. (Furthermore, the first look at the October 1 *SIS* data had blanks in the free/reduced lunch field for 116 children who were suppose to be Starting Points participants.) State-level Program coordinators may wish to investigate the free/reduced lunch program and then determine how its schedule may conflict with the deadlines set for the *Starting Points Preschool Program*.

Four coordinators, who represent 7.3% of the participating systems, opted to comment on the attendance requirement that is associated with TANF reimbursement. The Discussion section of this report will address the attendance requirement and a related new guideline that was added to the 2002-03 Program.

Two coordinators made reference to the criteria for eligibility that were previously used in Starting Points. One of these comments reflects greater ease in maintaining an enrollment due to the change in criteria. The other coordinator mentioned the former criterion that required parents/guardians to work, be in job training, and/or attend an educational program. In previous program years, it was suspected that parents/guardians who were working or in training/school might have difficulty attending parent involvement activities, but during previous program years, coordinators indicated that many programs successfully involved Starting Points parents/guardians in the education of their children.

Although one of the Standards pertains to Family Involvement and Support, the new Starting Points guidelines do not specify anything about mandatory parental involvement. Because high parental involvement is thought to be a characteristic of quality early childhood programs, it was felt that the parental involvement component should be monitored to detect any changes from the previous school year. The 2002-03 *PDS* included two items to assess parental involvement that were very similar to items used in the previous evaluation. The exhibits of the next section present the item responses. The Discussion section of this report will compare 2002-03 findings to those of 2001-02.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

EXHIBIT 12. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES OR SPECIAL PROVISIONS FREQUENTLY USED IN PARTICIPATING SYSTEMS (N = 55 Systems)

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES/PROVISIONS USED BY SYSTEMS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Inform parents of activities through calendars, newsletters, or other formal communication mechanisms	37	67.3
Hold individual parent/teacher conferences	35	63.6
Send frequent messages to parents relating to each child's activities	30	54.6
Hold parent workshops or meetings	18	32.7
Encourage parents to help with activities that are outside of the classroom (e.g., assist in cafeteria, make materials/snacks, or help with field trips)	18	32.7
Provide a parent handbook that includes the program philosophy, policies, and procedures	16	29.1
Request that parents help child with at-home learning activities	14	25.4
Hold open house	13	23.6
Inform parents of ways they may contribute to their child's development	12	21.8
Encourage parents to volunteer in classroom to help with daily activities	11	20.0
Allow parents to visit the classroom at their convenience	9	16.4
Schedule the parent involvement activities to accommodate the work/training schedules of parents/guardians	7	12.7
Work with other agencies or programs to provide assistance to our participating parents ¹	7	12.7
Provide a parent's bulletin board and/or message center	7	12.7
Offer alternatives for workshop attendance or classroom visitation ²	6	10.9
Involve parents by using other activities ²	6	10.9
Conduct home visits	6	10.9
Provide childcare assistance for workshop/meeting events	3	5.4

Source Reference:

Parental involvement data are from the *PDS* instrument. In Item III-1, system-level coordinators were asked to check the **three most frequently used** activities/provisions. Some coordinators checked more than three activities/provisions, thus the sum of the percents exceeds 100%.

¹ Assistance was provided by other programs/agencies as indicated by the following comments.

- “APPLES (Homeless), FINS (Families in Need of Services)”
- “Asthma Clinic at School, LSU School of Nursing/Seton Counseling Services”
- “HIPPIY is a program that provides assistance and support to participating families”
- “Migrant Education helps with clothing and school supplies. Even Start conducts group meetings with parents.”
- “Refer parents to social services, special education, health unit, or other agencies”
- “Even Start, Right Start, Head Start, Title I, LA 4, and Special Education”
- “Collaboration with Head Start and Model Early”

² Other parental involvement activities and alternatives that were listed are summarized in Exhibit 13.

**EXHIBIT 13. OTHER WAYS PARENTS/GUARDIANS
WERE INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM
(7 Coordinators)^{1,2}**

PARENTS/GUARDIANS WERE INVOLVED BY	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Alternatives for workshop attendance or classroom visitation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “HIPPY, Night Out for Reading, and Math Night offer alternatives for workshop attendance or classroom visitation.” • “Alternate times for meetings before and after school.” • “Scheduled after hours conferences, as needed.” • “Written communication – informal talks with parents before or after school – parent conferences” • “Materials are sent home, if parents were unable to attend workshops.” • “Title I Home Visiting Paraprofessionals conduct home visits upon request.” 	6	10.9
Other Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Parent handbook – Interactive home assignments” • “Night Out for Reading and Math Night are other activities which involve parents.” • “Community Helpers, Field Trips” • “Weekly Readers, School Wide Fund Raisers, Food and Toy Drives, Eat Breakfast and Lunch with child” • “Encourage parents to go on field trip experiences.” • “Send monthly calendars of activities parents need to do with their child daily. 	6	10.9

Source Reference:

The additional methods of parent involvement are from seven coordinators who responded to the *PDS* instrument, Items III-1p and/or III-1r.

¹ Each bullet in Exhibit 13 contains one coordinator’s complete response to the Item part. The percents in Exhibit 13 were computed by dividing the total number of systems per item by 55 systems and then multiplying by 100.

² In response to Item V, two coordinators (or 3.6%) made the following comments concerning the parents/guardians of the Starting Points children.

- “Encourage parents to become involved in child’s education. Provides information for parents on adult literacy workshop.”
- “We are delighted for our parents and students to be able to participate in Starting Points.”

Exhibit 14 and its footnotes present additional information on the attendance of the parents/guardians for workshops or meetings. Parental involvement activities of this nature are recommended, but the systems are not required to hold workshops or parent meetings.

EXHIBIT 14. THE PERCENT OF PARENTS
WHO TYPICALLY ATTEND THE PARENT WORKSHOPS
(55 Systems)¹

THE PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS TYPICALLY ATTENDING WORKSHOPS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Less than 25% of parents	12	21.8
25-49% of parents ²	17	30.9
50-74% of parents	12	21.8
75% or more of parents	4	7.3
Percent of attendance varies ³	4	7.3
No response	4	7.3
This system does not offer workshops for parents/guardians.	2	3.6
TOTAL⁴	55	100.0

Source Reference:

These *parent attendance data* are from the *PDS* instrument, Item III-2.

- ¹ Fifty-one system-level coordinators responded to Item III-2. Their responses were recorded in one category. When a coordinator marked more than one option, the response was coded in the “Percent of attendance varies” category. The percents in Exhibit 14 were computed by dividing the number of systems per category by 55 systems and then multiplying by 100.
- ² One coordinator also stated, “Graduation ceremony 85-95% of parents attend.”
- ³ The following statements may clarify parental workshop attendance for the systems coded in this category.
 - “The school system offers two Saturday parish-wide parent workshops. One is centrally located in the city and one is located in the rural part of the parish. Transportation is a problem for some of our parents and others work on Saturday. Due to these factors, attendance varies greatly among the program sites.”
 - “A lot of our parents work shift work.”
 - “We encourage parents to attend workshops scheduled at other places – ex. Incarnate Word Center.”
 - “Students are prorated at three sites. At one site there is a high percent of working parents. There is a lower attendance percentage at this site.”
- ⁴ Based on the coordinators’ responses, parent workshops were offered in 49 (or 89.1%) of the participating systems. In 29 systems, less than 50% of the parent/guardians were reported as attending the parent workshops, which represents 59.2% of the systems offering such workshops. However, 50.0% or more of the parents/guardians were said to attend the parent workshops in 16 systems.

Exhibits 12 through 14 provide findings for 2002-03, demonstrating that the parent involvement component of the *Starting Points Preschool Program* is still in place, despite other changes to the Program. This finding is encouraging since a quality preschool program has high parental involvement, both at the class and school level, as well as parents/guardians or other family members working with the children at home. The Discussion section of this report will include several additional remarks on the parent involvement findings.

Besides involving parents/guardians, quality early childhood programs also attend to the health, safety, and nutritional needs of the participating children. The Standards of Physical Environment, Transportation, Health and Safety Practices, and Nutrition and Food Service work together to ensure that the participants are in a safe place with good supervision, and the program promotes the children’s health and helps to meet their nutritional needs. For several years, the Starting Points evaluation studies have collected information on health/safety practices and policies; thus, it was of interest to obtain similar data

for 2002-03. The next section of the report provides a summary of the coordinator responses to Items IV-1 and IV-2 of the *PDS* instrument. The summary exhibits include any comments that coordinators added to Items IV-1 and IV-2. The Discussion and Conclusion sections of this report will contain more information on the 2002-03 findings.

HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION

EXHIBIT 15. ACTIVITIES/POLICIES USED TO PROVIDE A SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT (N = 55 Systems)

ACTIVITIES/POLICIES USED BY SYSTEMS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
The Starting Points children participate in fire/safety drills on a regular basis.	55	100.0
The state or city fire department inspects the school sites on an annual basis.	55	100.0
The schools serving Starting Points children have a policy concerning the administration of first aid and/or medications.	55	100.0
All equipment is maintained in good working condition. ¹	52	94.6
The outdoor play area provides at least seventy-five square feet of space per child, at any one time.	46	83.6
Outdoor play areas are enclosed. ²	45	81.8
Schools serving Starting Points children are inspected annually by the Office of Public Health.	43	78.2
Soft surfaces are placed under any equipment upon which the children might climb. ³	31	56.4
Excluding space for the furniture and shelving, classrooms are large enough to provide at least thirty-five square feet of space per child. ⁴	27	49.1
Outdoor sandboxes (sand areas) are covered when not in use. ⁵	23	41.8
Program staff are trained annually in child CPR procedures	21	38.2

Source Reference:

These data are from the *PDS* instrument, Item IV-1. The sum of the percents exceeds 100% because the coordinators were instructed to “check all that apply.”

¹ One coordinator wrote, “We attempt this.”

² One coordinator wrote, “At one site, not other” and a second coordinator reported, “4 of 5 are enclosed.”

³ One coordinator reported, “At one site, not other” and two coordinators indicated the item was not applicable within their systems.

⁴ A coordinator left Item IV-1i blank, but wrote “Including” to the side; an additional coordinator reported the item was true only at one of its schools.

⁵ Four coordinators reported that Item IV-1h was not applicable within the system.

**EXHIBIT 16. ACTIVITIES/PRACTICES USED TO PROMOTE
THE HEALTH OF STARTING POINTS PARTICIPANTS
(N = 55 Systems)**

ACTIVITIES/PRACTICES USED BY SYSTEMS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
The daily schedule includes planned physical exercise and/or outdoor play activities.	55	100.0
Vision screening is provided to Starting Points children.	55	100.0
Hearing screening is provided to Starting Points children. ¹	54	98.2
Well-balanced meals are provided each day.	54	98.2
The school has a breakfast program.	54	98.2
By system policy, children who have contagious health conditions may not attend class until they are well.	54	98.2
Classroom materials, mats, and furniture are sanitized on a regular basis.	54	98.2
Procedures are in place to assess/evaluate participants who continue to exhibit growth and development deficits.	53	96.4
The curriculum includes child-centered, developmentally appropriate instruction on health, good hygiene, and safety.	51	92.7
Nutritional snacks are provided on a daily basis.	50	90.9
Starting Points children are referred to other agencies for health services. ¹	47	85.4
The staff members have been trained to recognize the signs of child abuse.	44	80.0
Parents/guardians receive helpful information on nutrition, health, and safety.	43	78.2
Health services are provided at the school site by a physician/nurse to Starting Points children. ²	42	76.4
The school system is a Kid-Med Provider.	23	41.8
Immunizations are provided to Starting Points children. ³	16	29.1

Source Reference:

These data are from the *PDS* instrument, Item IV-2. The sum of the percents exceeds 100% because the coordinators were instructed to “check all that apply.”

- ¹ One coordinator wrote by *hearing screening*, “not unless special request” and also indicated that the children are referred to other agencies for health services “as needed.”
- ² When responding to Item IV-2p, one coordinator wrote, “weekly” and another commented, “Each school has visiting nurse; (name of school) has Health Clinic on site.”
- ³ Regarding the provision of immunizations to the children (Item IV-2o), five coordinators added:
- “Not at school”
 - “Through Parish Health Unit”
 - “At the local health unit.”
 - “Referred to Health Unit”
 - “Services through Health Unit or Private doctor.”

COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Item V of the *PDS* instrument invited the system-level coordinators to make any additional comments about the local *Starting Points Preschool Program*. Twenty-seven coordinators did not write any remarks in this space, and one coordinator only wrote “NA.” However, 27 coordinators provided comments in response to Item V. In some cases, the coordinators commented on more than one aspect of the local program. Comments were sorted into categories, based upon the topic of each sentence or group of related sentences. Exhibit 17 provides a summary overview of all the Item V responses. Earlier sections of this report included several comments to Item V; thus, these will not be repeated in this section, but Exhibit 18 will present the Item V comments, which were not previously presented in this report.

EXHIBIT 17: COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM (N = 42 Comments From Coordinators in 27 Systems)¹

TYPES OF ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM COORDINATORS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Identified the impact of the Program	8	29.6
Addressed funding	8	29.6
Discussed the attendance requirement or eligibility criteria ²	6	22.2
Wrote about present or past collaboration ³	6	22.2
Referred to evaluation of the program	3	11.1
Expressed interest in serving more children	3	11.1
Made a statement about Program teachers	2	7.4
Commented on the parents ⁴	2	7.4
Other coordinator statements	4	14.8

Source Reference:

These data are based on 27 coordinator responses to Item V from the *PDS* instrument.

¹ The 27 coordinators provided a total of 42 comments. Seventeen coordinators gave one comment, while seven coordinators commented on two aspects of the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. One coordinator discussed three aspects and two additional coordinators remarked on four aspects of the Program. The detailed comments are on pages 26-27, or in earlier sections of this report. The percents in Exhibit 17 were computed by dividing the number of comments in each category by 27 systems, and then multiplying by 100.

² Coordinators' comments about the attendance requirement or eligibility criteria were presented in Exhibit 11, page 18.

³ Comments about present or past collaboration were presented in Exhibit 7, page 11.

⁴ Comments focused on the parents were presented in Exhibit 13, page 21.

EXHIBIT 18. COMMENTS ON THE *STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM*

Comments Identifying the Impact of the Program (8 Systems)

“Our local Starting Points program has significantly enhanced our school system’s ability to provide a developmentally appropriate learning experience for every four-year-old child in the parish. Starting Points has become an integral component of the (name of parish) Early Childhood Education Program.”

“The Starting Points Program greatly enhances the preschool program in our school system.”

“The Starting Points Program in this district has been a very successful program. Parents, grandparents, the School Administrators and staff rave about the success of the program, and how Starting Points has greatly enhanced the primary school’s curriculum.”

“We feel like the Starting Points Program has been very successful in (name of parish) and are very pleased with impact it has made on our preschool program.”

“I feel that our parish is fortunate to have the funding for a Starting Points Program, and I feel that we are utilizing this program effectively. Many children are able to begin school as a 3 or 4 year old in our parish who would not without this Starting Points Program.”

“The Starting Points Program is an excellent program and it has provided opportunities for the four-year-olds in our community to experience and explore a variety of developmentally appropriate activities.”

“Provides an opportunity for early intervention for at-risk students” and “Based on at risk needs, not just test score.”

“The *Starting Points Preschool Program* in operation at (name of school) has a wonderful reputation for providing a vast array of childhood experiences that serve to prepare children to be successful throughout school. Preschool is the most effective intervention for preventing failure in school. Research solidly supports intervention programs in lieu of retention or labeling. The community is supportive of the program. The class is filled to the maximum capacity each year. The (name of parish) school system is grateful for the opportunity to have a *Starting Points Preschool Program*.”

Comments Addressing Funding (8 Systems)

“The TANF funding has allowed the classroom teachers the opportunity to purchase materials, supplies and equipment required under the *ECERS*, *NAEYC*, and Louisiana Performance Standards. There is not a shortage of funding to provide a high quality preschool class for Starting Points four-year-olds.”

“A very beneficial program which is so good for our 4-year-old students. Without these funds we would be unable to assist the 28 students we now serve.”

“The funding source of Starting Points allows us to continue serving 40 students. We are very appreciative of that.”

“Funds allocated allow materials and supplies to be purchased to replace old materials.”

“Our program would benefit if we received more funds to operate the program. With salary increases, we do not have enough money to buy needed materials, supplies, and equipment to effectively operate our *Starting Points Preschool Program*.”

“Due to a decrease in funding for the year 2002-2003, we were only able to serve 21 Starting Points children. This number has gradually decreased from 32 students for the school year 1999-2000.”

“Additional funding is necessary to continue providing the necessary supplies and supplemental classroom materials that enhance appropriate developmental activities. Presently our entire budget allocation is dedicated to salaries and benefits of our employees. Therefore, no funds are available for resource materials and activities.”

EXHIBIT 18 (CONTINUED). COMMENTS ON THE *STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM*

Comments Addressing Funding (8 Systems) (Continued)

“Since funding is provided by TANF monies, the Starting Points Program should be funded at the same level (\$5,000.00) per child as the LA 4 Program.”

Comments About the Attendance Requirement or Eligibility Criteria (6 Systems)

Four coordinators commented on the attendance requirement and two coordinators addressed eligibility criteria. These comments were presented in Exhibit 11, page 18.

Comments About Present or Past Collaboration (6 Systems)

Five coordinators commented on the present collaboration within the Program and one coordinator discussed past collaboration. These comments were presented in Exhibit 7, page 11.

Comments Referring to Evaluation of the Program (3 Systems)

“We invite you to visit our program anytime.”

“*ECERS-R* is an excellent tool by which one can evaluate the Starting Points Program.”

“Number 1, Part III frequently used activities/provisions to involve parents should be increased to a minimum of five (5) choices.”

Comments Expressing Interest in Serving More Children (3 Systems)

“It is our hope that the budget for Starting Points will be increased in the future so that we may once again service more at-risk children.”

“Our Starting Points Preschool offers a high quality early childhood development program. We wish that the program could be expanded to other school sites within our district.”

“Would like another program.”

Comments About Teachers (2 Systems)

“The Starting Points program consists of 100% certified teachers. These teachers are experienced and well equipped to make decisions about developmentally appropriate practices for four-year-old children. They have been teachers in the Starting Points program for several years and all hope to stay with this program in the future.”

“Arrangements will be made for the Starting Points teacher to be trained in CPR.”

Comments on the Parents (2 Systems)

Two coordinator comments on the parents were presented in Exhibit 13, page 21.

Other Coordinator Comments (4 Systems)

“As a program coordinator I feel privileged to offer benefits of this program to families, allowing their children to be ready for Kindergarten.”

“We are very proud of our Starting Points Program. These students are offered an excellent curriculum in early childhood education.”

“We will begin the implementation of a language arts curriculum program in January 2003 from a grant (QE2).”

“The *Starting Points Preschool Program* is successful and is an additive toward giving the preschoolers in (name of parish) the foundation they need to be successful in their academic pursuits.”

DISCUSSION OF THE 2002-03 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

In 2002-03, the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant provided \$5,019,000 for a program whose purpose is to assist low-income families by providing quality early childhood programs. With these funds and with modifications to the *Starting Points Preschool Program*, 55 school systems served Starting Points participants. Parents/guardians of young children were interested in the 2002-03 Program, as evidenced by the 3,732 applications that were received. The number of eligible children for the 2002-03 Program was 2,679, which was an increase over the 2,239 children who were eligible in 2001-02.

The 89 schools (i.e., 87 public schools and 2 nonpublic schools) housing Starting Points in 2002-03 enrolled 1,505 (or 56.2%) of the eligible applicants in 96 classes. In the previous year, there were 96 participating schools, 99 classes, one additional participating system, and 1,570 children enrolled at the beginning of the Program year. Participation in the 2002-03 Program declined from the prior year and 322 eligible children were on waiting lists in October 2002. The evaluation data did NOT lead to a conclusion that any particular eligibility criterion was disqualifying many applicants. However, the free/reduced lunch criterion was mentioned most often by coordinators who commented on the eligibility criteria.

The evaluation data collected in 2002-03 also does not answer questions about why some schools or systems discontinued offering the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. A system or school may not have been able to participate for a variety of reasons. A few plausible reasons could include the inability to find a certified teacher, nonavailability of an appropriate site, another Pre-K or preschool program becoming available or expanding its services, or previous year funding may have been too low. If there are any systems that have greatly changed their participation in Starting Points, the state-level Program coordinators may wish to communicate with the system-level coordinators, as an aid to planning for the next Program year.

One of the problems reported during the 2001-02 Program year was that an attendance policy was adversely affecting reimbursement. In the current evaluation study, four coordinators commented on this policy. Obviously, children will not benefit from this Program if they do not attend. However, there are times when these young children become ill or there are other extenuating circumstances that cause a child to miss preschool. The *Starting Points Preschool Program, Guidelines for SY 2002-03* (May 2002, pg. 4) contains a note about requesting payment for a child who is absent due to extenuating circumstances.

Two previous follow-up studies of recent Starting Points former participants (LDE, October 2001 and November 2002) found the groups of children served in Program years 1997-98 through 2000-01 had high attendance rates (i.e., most were above 95%). However, it is possible that individual children may have many more absences than is indicated by a cohort's attendance rate. Attendance may also vary greatly during a Program year, depending on factors such as flu epidemics and outbreaks of childhood diseases. Conditions affecting the community or a child's family may also have an impact on attendance. For example, some destructive storms hit Louisiana in the first few months of the 2002-03 Program. Any storm damage to the homes of the participating children, as well as disruptions in utility or transportation services may have resulted in less days of attendance in 2002-03 for some of the children. Damage to a school site might also create attendance and reimbursement problems if a Pre-K class has to be moved to a different campus.

The Starting Points children who were in attendance in 2002-03 received instruction from 96 teachers; 86.5% of these teachers were fully certified in the areas required by the Program regulations. In addition, 59 of these teachers had provided instruction during the 2001-02 Starting Points Program year,

but 37 teachers were considered to be new teachers since they had not taught in the 2001-02 Program. It is a practice of this Program for the state-level Program coordinators to visit every new teacher as well as selected continuing teachers during the year. These visits are for the purpose of assessing the local program with the *ECERS-R* instrument which is a measure of program quality. Because many of the teachers/program sites that were assessed in 2001-02 continued in 2002-03, the 2001-02 *ECERS-R* data were examined as an indicator of the program quality that was anticipated for the 2002-03 Program year. (The 2002-03 *ECERS-R* data will not be available until after this report is published.)

Thirty-five features of the 37 program sites that were assessed in 2001-02 were rated as 5.0 or above, indicating that the 2001-02 local programs were often of good quality, or of a higher quality. However, the *ECERS-R* items, which received average ratings below 5.0, assessed Nature/Science (4.5), Music/Movement (4.5), Gross Motor Equipment (4.6), the Space for Gross Motor Play (4.7), and Nap/Rest (4.9). While these average item-ratings almost reached the rating assigned to programs of good quality, program sites scoring low on these items may benefit if the staff members receive additional training in the desired practices.

In addition to implementing local programs of good quality and having a high percentage of fully-certified teachers, evaluation data suggested that the *Starting Points Preschool Program* enjoys the resource of collaboration. Summarizing across all items pertaining to collaboration, the majority of the systems were found to collaborate with 8(g) or Title I Preschool Programs; and in more than 90% of the systems there was a sharing of a curriculum and the registration procedures. Coordinators indicated that the people associated with the 2002-03 *Starting Points Preschool Program* collaborated in numerous ways. The following forms of collaboration were reported by 95% or more of the participating systems:

Teachers/Staff : Participate in professional or staff development activities (100%), Share ideas and/or materials to improve programs (100%), and Find ways to increase parental involvement and/or to communicate with the parents/guardians (100%).

Parents/Guardians: Help with a special event at school, such as a play, party, or seasonal program (98.2%) and join the children on the field trips (96.4%).

Have Professionals Who Provide: Hearing/vision screening (100%) and speech therapy (98.2%).

The first phase of this evaluation study also gathered data about the children who were enrolled at the beginning of the 2002-03 school year. Initial roster enrollments that were reported to the Elementary Standards Section indicated 1,505 children were enrolled by October 1, 2002. This enrollment is less than the initial roster count of 1,570 children who were enrolled at the beginning of the 2001-02 Program year. In both of these Program years, the majority of the participating systems were able to enroll 20 to 39 children in the *Starting Points Preschool Program* as the school years began. Systems offering Starting Points at only one school may not have been able to serve every eligible child, since classes are limited to a maximum of 20 children. In fact, in both the previous and the current Program years, some children were on waiting lists. By January 2002, the number of children on waiting lists for the 2001-02 Program was reduced from 378 (in 34 systems) to 206 in 28 systems. For the 2002-03 Program, the number of children on waiting lists in October 2002 was reported as 322 in 32 systems; by January 2003, a total of 224 children in 28 systems remained on waiting lists for the 2002-03 Program.

It was found that the October 1, 2002 *SIS* record count was 1,441 Starting Points participants for the 2002-03 Program year. The *SIS* count is less than the roster count because (1) the two nonpublic schools

do not report to *SIS*, (2) no *SIS* enrollment records were reported by two participating public school systems, and (3) additional public school systems had many less *SIS* records than the number of children reported through the initial roster counts. When *SIS* is incomplete, it has limits as a data source, but it does provide a way to track the majority of former program participants in follow-up studies, as well as ethnicity data.

As was shown in Exhibit 9, most of the 2002-03 Starting Points participants were identified as members of minority groups [Black (56.3%), Hispanic (2.8%), Asian/Pacific Islander (2.2%), or American Indian/Alaskan Natives (1.4%)], whereas the proportion of White children was 37.3%. Based on the previous year's *SIS* records, the ethnic composition of the 2001-02 Program participants was as follows: 59.2% Black children, 36.6% White, 2.3% Hispanic, 1.0% Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 0.9% American Indian/Alaskan Natives. The ethnicity of the 2002-03 participants was more diversified than that of children served in 2001-02, with slightly larger proportions of the children being members of the Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaskan Native minority groups.

In 2001-02, system-level coordinators reported data to indicate that 61.6% of the enrolled Starting Points children were from single-parent homes. The percent of 2002-03 participants who came from single-parent homes decreased to 55.6%.

The 2002-03 participants can also be described, with reference to their participation in the free/reduced lunch programs. Researchers consider the percent of students who participate in a school's free/reduced lunch program to be a proxy measure for the socioeconomic status of a school's students. In general, students from low-income families qualify for free/reduced lunches, while those of high-income families do not qualify. Thus, information on the free/reduced lunch participation was requested because Starting Points is now designed to serve low-income families. In fact, one of the new eligibility criteria requires each Starting Points child to be eligible for one of these lunch programs before the child is placed in the local program.

In Louisiana, students who participate in either of these lunch programs do come from low-income families. Typically, more than half of the state's public school students participate in the free/reduced lunch programs [approximately 58.2% in the 2000-01 school year and 58.4% in 1999-2000, as reported in the *2000-01 Louisiana State Education Report*, (March 2002)]. Based on reported *PDS* data, the system-level coordinators indicated that 1,243 (82.0%) of the 2002-03 participants were eligible to receive free lunches, while 273 (18.0%) were eligible to purchase lunches at a reduced price. The free/reduced lunch criterion is being used to determine whether or not the children may be served in Starting Points.

One of the Standards relates to Nutrition and Food Service. The reported *PDS* data leads to the conclusion that the Starting Points program does attend to the nutritional needs of the four-year-olds. For example, 98.2% of the participating systems (54 of 55 systems) reported that well-balanced meals were provided each day. The same percentage of systems indicated that the participating schools had a breakfast program. Nutritional snacks were provided on a daily basis in 90.9% of the systems. Parents/guardians also received helpful information on nutrition, health, and safety in 78.2% of the systems.

Standards on the Physical Environment, on Transportation, and on Health and Safety Practices have also been developed. As in previous evaluations, the 2002-03 *PDS* instrument contained items relating to the environment and to the health/safety practices utilized within the participating systems. For example, each system that offered the *2002-03 Starting Points Preschool Program* reported the following practices: (1) the daily schedule included planned physical exercise and/or outdoor play activities, (2) vision screening was provided to the Starting Points children, (3) the Starting Points children participated in fire/safety drills on a regular basis, and (4) all participating systems reported that the state or city fire

department inspects the participating schools on an annual basis. In 78.2% of the systems, the Office of Public Health also conducts inspections of the schools on an annual basis. Such inspections should ensure that the school facilities provide a relatively safe and healthy environment for children. Additional practices used in the Starting Points schools included providing child-centered, developmentally appropriate instruction on health, good-hygiene, and safety (in 92.7% of the systems); maintaining all equipment in good working condition (in 94.6% of the systems); and sanitizing the classroom materials, mats, and furniture on a regular basis (in 98.2% of the systems).

Regarding physical characteristics of the school sites, the system-level coordinators reported that the classrooms were large enough to provide at least 35 square feet of space per child in only 49.1% of the systems. In 83.6% of the systems, the outdoor play areas provided at least 75 square feet of space per child. Outdoor play areas were enclosed in 81.8% of the systems, and outdoor sandboxes (or sand areas) were covered when not in use in 41.8% of the systems. In 56.4% of the systems, soft surfaces are placed under any equipment upon which the children might climb.

Reported *PDS* data suggested that several methods were used to deliver health or medical services in the schools which served the Starting Points children. For example, 23 coordinators (representing 41.8% of the systems) indicated the school system is a Kid-Med Provider. Immunizations were provided to the children in 29.1% of the systems. In 42 systems (or 76.4%), health services were provided at the school site, whereas in 47 systems (85.4%), the Starting Points children could be referred to other agencies for health services. Hearing screenings were provided to Starting Points children in 98.2% of the systems.

All participating systems (100%) had a policy concerning the administration of first aid and/or medications. In 98.2% of the participating systems, there was also a policy that did not allow children with contagious conditions to attend class until they were well. In 38.2% of the systems, Program staff were trained annually in child CPR procedures; and in 80.0% of the systems, the staff members have been trained to recognize the signs of child abuse. Procedures were in place to assess/evaluate participants who continue to exhibit growth and development deficits in 96.4% of the systems.

Besides addressing the health, safety, and nutritional needs of participants, an important goal of the *Starting Points Preschool Program* is to involve the parents/guardians in the education of the children. In the past Program years, such involvement was difficult for the parents/guardians because of the federal requirement that the parents/guardians of the Starting Points participants were to be employed or enrolled in educational/job training programs. Since this criterion has been eliminated, it is of interest to compare the current year and previous year parent involvement data. Parent-involvement *PDS* items were phrased similarly in both Program years 2001-02 and 2002-03 to ensure that the resulting summary statistics could be compared in a valid manner.

Based on these comparisons, it was found that the systems which participated in the 2001-02 and in the 2002-03 *Starting Points Preschool Program* used a wide-variety of activities to facilitate parental involvement, just as had been the case in all previous Program years. In both recent Program years, half or more of the participating systems frequently used the same three activities to involve parents, which were to keep parents informed through formal communication mechanisms, to hold individual parent/teacher conferences, and to send frequent messages to parents.

The two-year comparison of parent-involvement data revealed that the percentage of systems frequently holding individual parent/teacher conferences increased from 60.7% in 2001-02 to 63.6% in 2002-03. The percentage of systems frequently sending messages to parents relating to each child's activities also increased from 50.0% of the systems in 2001-02 to 54.6% in 2002-03. However, informing parents of activities through calendars, newsletters, or other formal communication mechanisms was frequently used in 67.9% of the systems in 2001-02, declining slightly to 67.3% of the systems in 2002-

03. More than 25% of the participating systems also reported the following three parental involvement activities as frequently used in 2002-03: (1) encouraging parents to help with activities outside the classroom (32.7% vs. 46.4% in 2001-02); (2) providing a parent handbook that included the program philosophy, policies, and procedures (29.1% vs. 25.0% in 2001-02); and (3) requesting that parents help the child with at-home learning activities (25.4% vs. 30.4% in 2001-02).

Forty-nine participating systems (or 89.1%) offered parent workshops/meetings in 2002-03, with 32.7% of the system-level coordinators indicating the workshops were frequently used to involve the parents/guardians in the Program. Unfortunately, among 29 of the 49 systems offering workshops, the parent-attendance of workshops was less than 50%. However, 50.0% or more of the parents/guardians were said to attend the parent workshops in 16 systems. Comparing parent-attendance findings with those of the previous year suggests that the 2002-03 parent workshops/meetings were offered in a slightly smaller proportion (89.1%) of the participating systems than in 2001-02 when 89.3% of the systems offered workshops. However, in 2001-02, 15 systems indicated that less than 25% of the parents/guardians typically attended the workshops, whereas in 2002-03 only 12 systems indicated this lowest level of parent workshop attendance.

An optional, open-ended *PDS* item provided the coordinators an opportunity to make comments on the 2002-03 Program. Twenty-seven coordinators responded to this optional item, offering 42 distinct comments. Most frequently, coordinators made statements reflecting the positive impact of the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. Program funding was also a topic discussed by several coordinators. Other coordinators made reference to the attendance requirement, to eligibility criteria, and/or to Program collaboration.

The body of this report has included all the coordinator comments, as well as detailed findings about implementation and participation in the *2002-03 Starting Points Preschool Program*. The final section of this report presents conclusions about the Program that are based on comparisons of the 2002-03 Program data to earlier years of Program data.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Based on evaluation findings, the *Starting Points Preschool Program* has strengths, such as a history of successful implementation, its developmental philosophy, and recognition that the Program has a positive impact. In addition, 86.5% of the teachers who provided instruction were fully certified in 2002-03. In the 55 participating systems, local Starting Points programs often collaborated with other educational programs; teachers, staff, other professionals, and the parents/guardians collaborated with others to meet many needs of the Starting Points children.
2. As in the past, several methods were used to involve parents/guardians in the 2002-03 Program. Three techniques used on a frequent basis were that the systems: (1) kept the parents informed of activities (67.3%), (2) held individual parent/teacher conferences (63.6%), and (3) sent frequent messages to the parents (54.6%). There was a slight decrease in the percent of systems indicating parent workshops/meetings were offered (from 89.3% to 89.1% of the systems), and 29 systems reported that less than 50% of the parents/guardians typically attended these workshops/meetings in 2002-03.
3. In 2002-03, the 89 participating schools served a diverse group of children. The majority of the enrolled children were members of minority groups (56.3% Black, 2.8% Hispanic, 2.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, or 1.4% American Indian/Native American) and 37.3% were White children. A total of 55.6% of the Program participants came from single-parent homes in 2002-03. The 1,505 enrolled children came from low-income families (82% eligible for free lunches and 18% eligible for reduced-price lunches). When commenting on the free/reduced lunch eligibility criterion, some system-level coordinators indicated that applications for Starting Points were taken before it was possible to determine a child's eligibility for free or reduced-priced lunches.
4. While there were more applicants in 2002-03 than in 2001-02, the number of school systems offering Starting Points declined slightly. In 2002-03, the systems identified more eligible children, but enrolled fewer children than in 2001-02, and had fewer children on the waiting lists. Possible factors contributing to lower October 1 enrollments may have included a decrease in the number of classes (from 99 to 96 classes) and in the number of schools (from 96 to 89 schools) from 2001-02 to 2002-03. Approximately 63.6% of the systems offered the 2002-03 Program at only one school.
5. Some systems would like to serve more children. However, the *Starting Points Preschool Program* may not be able to expand without funding the approved participating systems/schools at a higher level. Furthermore, if the attendance requirement continues to create reimbursement difficulties, it may need to be modified.
6. Twenty-one of the 2002-03 classes had not served Starting Points children in 2001-02. Features of these new participating sites may not be like those of continuing sites, where prior year ratings on *The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ECERS-R)* suggested the local Starting Points programs were of good quality. The 2002-03 *ECERS-R* data are not yet available, but the *Program Description Survey (PDS)* data did reveal changes in the desired health and safety practices.

7. From 2001-02 to 2002-03, the following health and safety practices were reported by smaller proportions of the participating systems:
- Hearing screenings were provided to Starting Points children (from 100.0% to 98.2%).
 - The curriculum included child-centered, developmentally appropriate instruction on health, good hygiene, and safety (from 100.0% to 92.7%).
 - All equipment was kept in good working condition (from 96.4% to 94.6%).
 - Outdoor play areas provided 75 square feet of space per child (from 89.3% to 83.6%).
 - Parents/guardians received helpful information on nutrition, health, and safety (from 85.7% to 78.2%).
 - Staff members had been trained to recognize the signs of child abuse (from 80.4% to 80.0%).
 - Soft surfaces were placed under equipment upon which the children might climb (from 58.9% to 56.4%).
 - Classrooms were large enough to provide at least 35 square feet of space per child (from 57.1% to 49.1%).
 - Immunizations were provided to Starting Points children (from 53.6% to 29.1%).
 - The school system was a *Kid-Med Provider* (from 48.2% to 41.8%).
 - Program staff were trained annually in child CPR procedures (from 39.3% to 38.2%).
8. However, from the 2001-02 Program to the 2002-03 Program, there was an increase in the percent of systems reporting the following services or practices:
- Outdoor sandboxes (sand areas) were covered when not in use (from 39.3% to 41.8%).
 - Schools were inspected by the Office of Public Health (from 71.4% to 78.2%).
 - Health services were provided at the school site by a physician/nurse to Starting Points children (from 75.0% to 76.4%).
 - Outdoor play areas were enclosed (from 80.4% to 81.8%).
 - Starting Points children were referred to other agencies for health services (from 82.1% to 85.4%).
 - Nutritional snacks were provided on a daily basis (from 87.5% to 90.9%).
 - Classroom mats, materials, and furniture were sanitized on a regular basis (from 92.9% to 98.2%).
 - Procedures were in place to assess/evaluate participants who continue to exhibit growth and development deficits (from 94.6% to 96.4%).
 - By policy, children who have contagious health conditions may not attend class until they are well (from 96.4% to 98.2%).
 - Schools have a policy about first aid and/or medications (from 96.4% to 100%).
 - State/city fire Departments inspect the school sites annually (from 98.2% to 100%).
 - Vision screenings were provided to Starting Points children (from 98.2% to 100%).

This report has focused on implementation and participation findings for the 2002-03 Program year. At a later date, the evaluators plan to conduct a follow-up study that tracks children who were served in several of the previous Program years as the children continue in Louisiana public schools.

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- 2000-01 Louisiana State Education Progress Report*. (March 2002). Baton Rouge: LA. Moran Printing, Inc. for the Louisiana Department of Education, Office of Management and Finance, Division of Planning, Analysis and Information Resources.
- 2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program, Program Description Evaluation Report* (July 2002). Baton Rouge: LA. Louisiana Department of Education, Office of Management and Finance, Division of Planning, Analysis and Information Resources.

APPENDIX

**LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIVISION OF PLANNING, ANALYSIS AND INFORMATION RESOURCES
2002-03 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION SURVEY
(Revised 10/09/02)**

The Louisiana Department of Education is conducting an evaluation of the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. Early Childhood Coordinators in participating school systems/schools are asked to provide the following information relative to preschool classes either totally or partially funded by the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. Data previously collected through the use of the Starting Points Student Application Forms and Student Rosters can be used in completing the 2002-03 Program Description Survey form.

SYSTEM COORDINATOR: _____

SCHOOL SYSTEM NAME: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____ FAX NUMBER: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

SUPERINTENDENT VERIFICATION:

I verify that the information contained in this Program Description Survey is accurate and complete.

Superintendent's Signature

Date

Return by **November 22, 2002** to:
Barbara Abshire
Louisiana Department of Education
Division of Planning, Analysis and Information Resources
Data Management
Post Office Box 94064
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9064
Telephone: (225) 342-1522
Fax: (225) 342-1912

ALL SURVEY ITEMS RELATE TO THE STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM ONLY.**I. Applicant, Eligibility Criteria, and Participant Information** (Please refer to the Starting Points Student Application Forms to provide these aggregate data.)

1. How many applicants did you have for the *Starting Points Preschool Program*? _____
2. How many of these applicants were eligible for the *Starting Points Preschool Program*? _____
3. If your system had a waiting list, how many children who were eligible for the *Starting Points Preschool Program* were on the waiting list as of October 1, 2002? _____
4. How many of the participating children qualify for:

Free meals	_____
Reduced Price Meals	_____
5. How many of the eligible children, who are participating in the *Starting Points Preschool Program*, live with only one parent/guardian? _____
6. If you have any comments on the eligibility criteria for 2002-03, please list them in the following space.

II. Program Collaboration

1. Check **all** of the following that are collaborated with your school system's *Starting Points Preschool Program*.
 - a. Title I Preschool Program
 - b. Any early childhood program funded by 8(g)
 - c. Head Start
 - d. Any early childhood program coordinated with Special Education
 - e. Even Start
 - f. Reading Excellence Act (REA) Program
 - g. LA 4
 - h. Please identify any other preschool or pre-Kindergarten programs that collaborate with your system's *Starting Points Preschool Program*.

II. Program Collaboration (Continued)

2. In the following table, please **check the blank of all applicable** entries to help summarize the people and the ways in which these people collaborate with your school system's *Starting Points Preschool Program*.

The People:	Ways the People Collaborate:
Teachers/staff	<input type="checkbox"/> a. Participate in professional or staff development activities, such as inservices, workshops, conferences, other trainings. <input type="checkbox"/> b. Have grade-level meetings. <input type="checkbox"/> c. Share ideas and/or materials to improve programs. <input type="checkbox"/> d. Curriculum development activities. <input type="checkbox"/> e. Plan lessons, activities, and/or thematic units. <input type="checkbox"/> f. Observe in each other's classrooms. <input type="checkbox"/> g. Find ways to increase parental involvement and/or to communicate with the parents/guardians.
Children of another program	<input type="checkbox"/> h. Are in a prorated class and share all activities. <input type="checkbox"/> i. Interact on the playground. <input type="checkbox"/> j. Join the Starting Points children for several daily activities. <input type="checkbox"/> k. Also attend field trips and/or participate in special events. <input type="checkbox"/> l. Use the library, computer lab, gym, cafeteria, and/or music room (etc.) at the same time as the Starting Points children.
Parents and guardians	<input type="checkbox"/> m. Volunteer to help with a special task such as reading, art projects, and/or materials preparation. <input type="checkbox"/> n. Receive information together by attending workshops or parent meetings. <input type="checkbox"/> o. Help with a special event at school, such as a play, party, or seasonal program for the children. <input type="checkbox"/> p. Join the children on the field trips. <input type="checkbox"/> q. Share with the participating children something about work, a hobby, a special talent, and/or a culture.
Professionals	Who provide: <input type="checkbox"/> r. Health services and/or immunizations. <input type="checkbox"/> s. Social services and/or counseling. <input type="checkbox"/> t. Legal assistance. <input type="checkbox"/> u. Dental care. <input type="checkbox"/> v. Literacy training for parents/guardians. <input type="checkbox"/> w. Safety education. <input type="checkbox"/> x. Hearing/vision screening. <input type="checkbox"/> y. Speech therapy. <input type="checkbox"/> z. Evaluation or appraisal of the children.

3. Please check **any** of the following if these are shared by the *Starting Points Preschool Program* and one or more other early childhood programs.

- a. Method of program advertisement.
 b. Waiting list of eligible children.
 c. Registration procedures.
 d. A curriculum.
 e. Costs of a particular class.
 f. Before school care.
 g. After school care.

III. Parent Involvement

1. From among the following activities, or special provisions, check the **three most frequently used** activities/provisions in your system that involve the parents/guardians.
 - a. Hold individual parent/teacher conferences
 - b. Hold parent workshops or meetings
 - c. Provide a parent's bulletin board and/or message center
 - d. Send frequent messages to parents relating to each child's activities
 - e. Provide a parent handbook that includes the program philosophy, policies, and procedures
 - f. Conduct home visits
 - g. Inform parents of ways they may contribute to their child's development
 - h. Encourage parents to volunteer in classroom to help with daily activities
 - i. Encourage parents to volunteer to help with activities that are outside of the classroom (e.g., assist in cafeteria, make materials/snacks, or help with field trips)
 - j. Hold open house
 - k. Inform parents of activities through calendars, newsletters, or other formal communication mechanisms
 - l. Request that parents help child with at-home learning activities
 - m. Allow parents to visit the classroom at their convenience
 - n. Provide child care assistance for workshop/meeting events
 - o. Schedule parent involvement activities to accommodate the work/training schedules of parents/guardians
 - p. Offer alternatives for workshop attendance or classroom visitation (Please specify below.)

 - q. Work with other agencies or programs to provide assistance to the participating families (Please specify.)

 - r. Involve parents by using other activities, such as: (Please specify.)

2. If your system offers parent workshops, check **one of the following** to indicate the percentage of parents/guardians who typically attend these workshops.
 - a. Less than 25% of parents/guardians
 - b. 25 - 49% of parents/guardians
 - c. 50 - 74% of parents/guardians
 - d. 75% or more of the parents/guardians
 - e. This system does not offer workshops for parents/guardians.
 - f. Percentage of attendance varies greatly among the program sites. (Please explain below.)

IV. Health and Safety Activities, Practices, and Policies

1. In your local Starting Points programs, what activities/policies are used to provide a safe and healthy environment for the participants? (Check **all that apply** to your program sites.)
 - a. Schools serving Starting Points children are inspected annually by the Office of Public Health.
 - b. The state or city fire department inspects the school sites on an annual basis.
 - c. The Starting Points children participate in fire/safety drills on a regular basis.
 - d. The schools serving Starting Points children have a policy concerning the administration of first aid and/or medications.
 - e. Program staff are trained annually in child CPR procedures.
 - f. Soft surfaces are placed under any equipment, upon which the children might climb.
 - g. All equipment is maintained in good working condition.
 - h. Outdoor sandboxes (sand areas) are covered, when not in use.
 - i. Excluding space for the furniture and shelving, classrooms are large enough to provide at least thirty-five square feet of space per child.
 - j. The outdoor play area provides at least seventy-five square feet of space per child, at any one time.
 - k. Outdoor play areas are enclosed.

2. In your local Starting Points programs, what activities/practices are used to promote the health of the participants? (Check **all that apply** to your program sites.)
 - a. Well-balanced meals are provided each day.
 - b. Nutritional snacks are provided on a daily basis.
 - c. Classroom materials, mats, and furniture are sanitized on a regular basis.
 - d. The curriculum includes child-centered, developmentally appropriate instruction on health, good hygiene, and safety.
 - e. Parents/guardians receive helpful information on nutrition, health, and safety.
 - f. The daily schedule includes planned physical exercise and/or outdoor play activities.
 - g. The staff members have been trained to recognize the signs of child abuse.
 - h. Procedures are in place to assess/evaluate participants who continue to exhibit growth and development deficits.
 - i. Starting Points children are referred to other agencies for health services.
 - j. The school system is a Kid Med Provider.
 - k. By system policy, children who have contagious health conditions may not attend class until they are well.
 - l. The school has a breakfast program.
 - m. Vision screening is provided to Starting Points children.
 - n. Hearing screening is provided to Starting Points children.
 - o. Immunizations are provided to Starting Points children.
 - p. Health services are provided at the school site by a physician/nurse to Starting Points children.

V. Comments

Please use the space on this page to make any additional comments about your local *Starting Points* *Preschool Program*.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED COOPERATION AND SUPPORT.
BEST WISHES FOR YOUR 2002-03 PROGRAM.**